

SPECIAL FEATURE on RICHARD HARWOOD

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Birth: 8th August 1979 - Portsmouth, England

Full name: **Richard Craig Harwood**

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Richard Harwood was born in Portsmouth, Hampshire and began learning to play the piano, aged four (his teachers included Diana Bell and Joyce Rathbone) and the cello, aged five. He attended Ditcham Park School. He achieved his Associated Board Grade 8 in cello, aged 8 and in piano, aged 11 - incredibly young ages!

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After two local teachers, Richard studied with Joan Dickson from 1988 until her death in 1994, before continuing with Steven Doane and David Waterman (1994-1999), Heinrich Schiff (1999-2003 at the University of Music and Dramatic Art, Vienna) and Ralph Kirshbaum (2003-2005 at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester). He complemented his studies by taking master classes and lessons with Mstislav Rostropovich, János Starker, Steven Isserlis, Boris Pergamenschikow, Miklós Perényi, Bernard Greenhouse, Valentin Erben (Alban Berg Quartet), William Pleeth, Zara Nelsova, and Ferenc Rados.

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Richard has won numerous awards including the 2004 Pierre Fournier Award for 'cellists. In 1992, he became the youngest ever winner of the Audi Junior Musician Award. In addition, he won the Worshipful Company of Musicians Maisie Lewis Young Artists Award in 2001 and, in 2004, Richard became the first British 'cellist ever to be awarded the title "Bachpreisträger" at the International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition, Leipzig. Among many other accolades, he received the special "mention" prize from the jury at the Concours de violoncelle Rostropovitch, Paris in 2005.

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Richard had already made his concerto debut at the tender age of ten, playing the Kabalevsky Concerto in G minor at the Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham. He made his BBC Radio 3 debut at the age of thirteen with a live recording of the Elgar Concerto. Since then he has gone on to perform concertos and recitals in major venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, Musikverein, Concertgebouw, Alte Oper, Thomaskirche, and the Auditorium du Louvre.

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He has collaborated with conductors such as John Wilson, Okko Kamu, Marko Letonja, Douglas Bostock, En Shao, Shuntaro Sato, David Parry and Yehudi Menuhin, and with numerous first level orchestras including The Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Ural Philharmonic Orchestra. As chamber musician, he has collaborated with the Jerusalem and Endellion Quartets, Gidon Kremer, Yuri Bashmet, Olivier Charlier, Benjamin Schmid, Alena Baeva, Ilya Gringolts, Pekka Kuusisto, Vilde Frang, Chen Halevi, Julian Bliss, Martin Roscoe, Finghin Collins, Ashley Wass, Gottlieb Wallisch, and Julius Drake, among others. In 2014, Richard became the cellist of the Sitkovetsky Trio.

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In 2018 he was offered the wonderful post of becoming the new principal cello for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He has quickly established his influence there, his mark of authority and involvement in many of the orchestra's activities.

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Richard records substantially. He is regularly heard on BBC, and has also given performances for Radio France, MDR, RTÉ, and Radio New Zealand. Richard's special and unusual discography include a critically acclaimed debut disc for EMI Classics, recorded with pianist Christoph Berner, and 'Composing Without The Picture', a 2013 solo album of concert works written by film composers, on Resonus. In addition, Richard can be seen and heard in Phil Grabsky's 2009 documentary In Search of Beethoven which received its theatrical premiere at the Barbican Theatre, London, was broadcast on Sky Arts, and shown in cinemas worldwide.

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Contemporary music plays an important role for him. This initially was noted in 2002 when he took part in the Park Lane Group Young Artists' Series on the South Bank and premiered solo works written for him by Dominic Muldowney and Martin Butler. He has also worked with Philip Grange, giving the London premiere of his Nocturnal Image and given the European premiere of David Horne's Zip with the composer at the piano. For his solo album Composing Without the Picture, Richard premiered works written for him by Christopher Gunning, Alex Heffes, Fernando Velázquez, and Benjamin Wallfisch.

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His fame has grown and grown; worth mentioning that in 1997, the BBC Music Magazine selected him in their worldwide "Who's Who" edition and, in 2000, Richard was entered into the "International Who's Who in Music" as an 'up and coming talent on the brink of worldwide recognition.' Even more flattering, the 'Strad' magazine has described him as '[...] probably the greatest young 'cello talent since Jacqueline du Pré'. Obviously therefore, I feel sure that this is a name that will be alongside us in the forthcoming decades, and rightly so.

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Richard plays a cello by Francesco Rugeri, dated 1692.

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Hear his musicality and sensitivity:

Rachmaninov's 'Vocalise' performed by cellist Richard Harwood and pianist James Pearson -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMx5MMBkuUI>

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And to sum up, a most interesting interview here:

RPO Principal Cello Richard Harwood on life with the RPO

<https://www.rpo.co.uk/about/news-press/80-news/379-rpo-principal-cello-richard-harwood-on-life-with-the-rpo>

Here's a great question and answer from that!:

Do you see playing with the RPO as a tick box on the curriculum vitae from which you'll ultimately move on one day?

"I don't see it like at all. I've been really fortunate to have an exciting career as a soloist and also a chamber musician - it's a fantastic experience to also be able to play in orchestras. So far I've only discovered benefits to adding working with orchestras to my musical life, so I very much hope that that continues. As for the RPO I'm very proud to be a part of it. It's an orchestra that I've always looked up to and respected - it's full of really fantastic musicians and personalities. A lot of people who come into the RPO come in as guests who have experience in other orchestras and then speak about the special kind of social element within it and that it's a wonderful place to be. I don't see the RPO as a stepping stone or anything like that. I'm very happy where I am and happy to take each day as it comes and see what happens."

For me, as the big London orchestra I most once played for, that's nice to hear!

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